

Jim's deep community roots quickly positioned him as an activist and community organizer. In 1986 he ran for the Cook County Board of Commissioners, and although his bid was not successful, it was groundbreaking as he was one of the first openly gay people to run for public office in Illinois.

As is the case for all trailblazers, Jim has faced and overcome significant challenges in his personal and professional life. From witnessing rampant domestic violence, drug abuse, and homicide within the LGBTQ community to the many lives we lost to the AIDS epidemic in Chicago and across the country, Jim has withstood phenomenal pain.

Throughout times of unthinkable tragedy, Jim's warm energy and generous spirit have never wavered. His drive, compassion, and fantastic flamboyance are remarkable and have allowed him to be incredibly successful. He has played a tremendous role in shaping the LGBTQ community around the country, and his impact on the City of Chicago is immeasurable. As a businessman in the LGBTQ and Chicago community, he has blazed trails and opened doors for so many others.

And as a public servant, activist and community leader, he has made sure that the needs of the LGBTQ community were not ignored by our government. I am honored to call Jim a friend and wish him all the best and continued success.

TRIBUTE TO YOUNG STAFF MEMBERS FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE OF THE 18TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF TEXAS AND THE UNITED STATES

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 2021

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Madam Speaker, in these tumultuous days of crisis and challenge, Members of Congress know well, perhaps better than most, how blessed our nation is to have in reserve such exceptional young men and women who will go on to become leaders in their local communities, states, and the nation in the areas of business, education, law, government, philanthropy, the arts and culture, and the military.

We know this because we see them and benefit from their contributions every day. Many of them work for us in our offices as junior staff members, congressional fellows, or interns and they do amazing work for and on behalf of the constituents we are privileged to represent.

Madam Speaker, I believe there is no higher calling than the call to serve a cause larger than ourselves. That is why I ran for public office. I was inspired to serve by President Kennedy who said, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country," and by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who said:

"Everybody can be great because anybody can serve. . . . You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love."

By this measure, there are several other great young men and women who served as

volunteers this year in my offices. They braved the dangers of the pandemic that has wrought so much suffering and heartbreak across our nation. They cheerfully do their duty in the U.S. Capitol complex that just six months ago was the site of an insurrection attack not seen since the War of 1812. These dedicated and public-spirited men and women may toil in obscurity but their contributions to the constituents we serve are deeply appreciated. That is why today I rise to pay tribute to five extraordinary young persons for their service to my constituents in the 18th Congressional District of Texas and to the American people. They are:

Alejandro Garcia Escobar Plascencia, Georgetown University;

Jacqueline White Menchaca, Arizona State University;

Idia Irele, Smith College and Harvard University;

Anthony Collier, Texas Southern University; and

Valencia Shuler, Rice University.

Madam Speaker, the energy, intelligence, and idealism these wonderful young people brought to my office and those interning in the offices of my colleagues help keep our democracy vibrant. The insights, skills, and knowledge of the governmental process they gain from their experiences will last a lifetime and prove invaluable to them as they go about making their mark in this world.

Because of persons like them the future of our country is bright, and its best days lie ahead. I wish them all well.

Madam Speaker, I am grateful that such thoughtful committed young men and women can be found working in my office, those of my colleagues, and in every community in America. Their good works will keep America great, good, and forever young.